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MONDAY MORNING, DECEMBER 11, 1882.

THE COMING CONVENTION.

The Newmarket Era has an article on the liberal convention called for next month. It is well known that the Era at one time was an out-and-out reform paper. Owing, however, to certain differences in the party it chose to take an independent course, though had a convention been called some time ago the Era and other journals and a good number of reform "bolters" would have been "harmonized" before this.

The Era goes on to say "had a grand representative convention of the liberal party been held previous to the last session of the Mackenzie administration's power, and the sentiments of the liberal element of the dominion voiced on the trade policy of the country, the party would never have been committed to the 'fly on the wheel' notions of Mr. Cartwright."

BETTER GAS AND CHEAPER.

There is no reason why the price of gas in Toronto should not be lowered, and it is quite certain that a better quality of the illuminating medium might easily be supplied. Complaints are frequent of flickering and of the dirty light produced. As to price it may be stated that the average cost per 1000 feet in England is sixty cents. It may not be generally known, but it is a fact that the price of coal plays a very small part in the cost of gas production, the by-products obtained from the coal in every instance being worth more than the original price of the coal. There is no reason why such a disparity should exist between the prices here and in England. The cause is to be found in this, that here the company has a monopoly, while in England the companies are under very stringent rules. In both Canada and the United States the people have been bled by monopolies on account of defects in their gas laws, whereby it is possible for gas stocks to be watered. It is to be hoped the electric light will soon become an active competitor in the illuminating field.

CANADIAN INDEPENDENCE.

From La Patrie, Montreal.

A year ago the Toronto World, a first class liberal journal, advocated the idea of a third party. The World gives a general support to the policy of Mr. Blake, but at the same time discards the beaten paths of the Globe. It frankly recognizes the national policy as a working towards emancipation, and openly pronounces in favor of a change in our relations with the mother country. The World like Mr. Blake would like to see this young country take a higher and more important position in the eyes of other nations, and holds that our commercial interests should not be subordinate to those of England. The World demands, like the rising generation, a larger field, a more expanded horizon. The great reforms of the country have been accomplished, and it is hardly probable, on the re-assembling of the house of commons, that ministers will find sufficient measures to make up a speech from the throne. These party struggles are becoming barren, and very often resolve themselves into a belittling of the politicians. The people, viewing these scandalous contentions, is becoming indifferent, is losing its moral sensibility and is finally coming to believe that politics is nothing more nor less than a see-saw game by which each party periodically profits.

We must liberate ourselves from this narrow groove by which our best patriots are extinguished and our finest spirits withered. Let us raise the banner of independence as The World has done, and very soon our public men, fighting for a great and noble idea, an idea worthy of honest espousal, will cause our politics to emerge from the lethargy into which they seem plunged, and they will inspire into the people a national sentiment which will hasten the glorious day of our political emancipation.

THE DEATH OF SIR HUGH ALLAN.

The death of the head of the Allan steamship company will not probably make any great difference in the conduct of this important ocean line. Some younger members of the family will take a more prominent part than heretofore in its management; but it is extremely unlikely that there will be any departure to speak of from the system of management now so long established. Half the capital of the company is, we believe, owned in Montreal, and half in Scotland. The steamship line will continue to be run very much in the same way as before, but some interest will attach to the possible effect of Sir Hugh's death on various railway enterprises which he is believed to have had in hand recently. And what these particularly are we shall probably hear very soon from Montreal sources.

THE IMPARTIAL PRESS.

As an editor, Thurlow Weed was one of that school which has now perhaps passed away, of journalists who aimed to be leaders rather than reflectors of political movements. Formerly the most influential newspapers were party organs, and their editors were frequently party leaders. Nowadays, the most influential newspapers are those that are independent, and their editors aim, from an impartial standpoint, to instruct and persuade the masses of the people in regard to all questions of public importance.—New York Weekly Witness.

Such an independent press is rapidly coming to the front in Canada, and its ranks will certainly be strengthened this week by the reappearance of the Bystander, the leading writer of which did not a little towards breaking up the old party despotism that controlled both our politics and our press. The out-and-out party organs have improved their tone somewhat, owing to the presence of the independent journals. We cannot yet have all our journals independent; many have to look for their support from their party; but there is plenty of room for these same to be more independent in their own party. An independent support is of more benefit than a servile following—of more benefit to either of the two parties concerned, the supporter and the supported. The man or journal who occasionally "speaks out" in his own party only increases his influence thereby.

THE GLOBE TAKES STOCK IN STOCKINGS.

One of Beranger's most amusing ballads is that in which a frisky old grandmama recalls, in a chat with her grand-daughters, the flirtations of her youth; to the refrain, "Ah que je regrette, le temps perdu!" The Globe has of late given way to several gay and festive outbreaks, but last Saturday's issue of that venerable paper is enough to shook the unco righteous, and to recall very vividly the talk of Beranger's naughty old woman. Our once staid if not austere contemporary devotes half a column to the interesting topic of young ladies' stockings. Of them all styles and colors are discussed—not in the dry business tone of an ordinary newspaper puff of its biggest dry-goods "ad," but with a warmth of coloring worthy of Swinburne. We are told how "Cary doted on dull grey, brown, and set blue, pinked out with bright silks and gold thread," it is added that "for full dress, on and off the stage, and also for tights,"—no reference is here intended, we hope, to habits of intoxication—"flesh color was also selected." Nor does this too utterly delightful writer limit us to a glimpse of the fairyland of stockings, we are told what sweet harmonies can be evoked by a contrast between the ground color of the hose and the brighter hues of that sacred cincture which gives the name to one of England's noblest orders of chivalry. "Miss Winant leans towards blue and Correno chocolate, with garters of blue." Amid much that that is so charming it seems ungracious to find fault with slight unintelligibilities, but we sometimes fear that "much learning about stockings, garters and limbs" has slightly obscured the Globe writer's vast intellect. What are we to make of this: "Mme. Patti has the plumpest of legs, that hang over her trim little boots"? Can such things be? Does this lady resemble the six-legged sheep of the itinerant museum show? Has she two additional legs which "hang down over her trim little boots"? Or are the actual boot-wearing legs so "plumpest" that, like the fat of a very fat goose, they "hang down"? It is consoling to be told that she "finds salvation in ebony stockings."

TARIFF PROSPECTS AT WASHINGTON.

The substance of the American tariff commissioner's report has been published, and has been the subject of much comment by the press on both sides of the border. Regarding what the report really amounts to, Canadian newspapers generally appear to have formed anything but clear and correct ideas. Most of them interpret it as a great victory for free trade, and an acknowledgement that protection has proved a mistake. It is very far from being anything of the kind, as a little examination of the facts will show.

When it is said that the duties on this or the other class of articles are reduced 25 per cent, people generally take it to mean that duties which are now 50 per cent will be cut down to 25 per cent. This is an important mistake. The reduction meant is 25 per cent of the old duty, which would make the new duty 37½ per cent. Similarly, a 60 per cent duty cut down by 60 per cent would not be left at 40 per cent, but at four-fifths of the old rate, or 48 per cent. Unless we keep this distinction in mind, we shall go all wrong in our estimate of the changes proposed.

The sugar duties, we read, are to be reduced by an average of about 15 per cent; that is to say—the new rates will be to the old in the proportion of six to seven, very nearly. But, as the reduction is upon the various grades of sugar *in proportion*, the whole scale remains as protective as before; some say even more than before.

In chemicals of various kinds, which form a considerable part of the raw material of many important manufactures, the changes proposed are really sweeping. Not only are some duties largely reduced, but numerous articles are placed on the free list. This will be a decided gain to many manufactures; which would actually be better protected under the proposed new tariff than under the old one.

In cottons and silks the ad valorem duties are mostly abandoned, and only the specific duties retained. As it is the latter which are most effective in giving protection, for the reason that they cannot be evaded by undervaluation, these manufactures are still left very well protected. Only in the article of cotton sewing thread do we hear of any particular complaint from those directly interested; and this is ascribed to an oversight which congress will undoubtedly rectify.

Coming to wools and woollens, the average reduction is small, and the maintenance of both specific and ad valorem rates is strongly insisted on in the report. As the present duties on woollen goods range from 40 to over 100 per cent on the value, we can see how wide a margin there is for reductions which shall still leave the woollen manufacture very well protected.

On farm and other raw produce generally no reductions are recommended; the reason given being that they are already so low that they will not bear being reduced. Farm produce and lumber now pay about 70 per cent, and this the report says should be left as it is. A reciprocity movement has been started at Detroit, but it does not seem to amount to anything at Washington. As the main object of the movement on the other side is to obtain a market here for American manufactures, Canadians need not be particularly anxious to see it succeed. Ever since the 15th of March, 1879, we have kept upon our books a standing offer to our neighbors of reciprocity in *natural products*. That kind of reciprocity—the same is under the old treaty—they can have at any time without any new treaty or negotiations for a treaty at all.

The reductions in iron and hardware goods generally are not great, and will still leave manufacturers of this class highly protected. But the reduction which attracts most attention of all is that on street rails, which from 1½ cents per pound is brought down to four-fifths of a cent. The old duty is $28 per gross ton of 2240 pounds; the new duty is to be $17.92. It has been said that the steel rail men will fight hard against this, and freetraders are claiming the proposed change as a great concession. But a little rule and figure work will show that the alleged free trade gain is more in appearance than in reality. The present price of steel rails in England being about $28 per ton, the new duty would be 63 per cent on the value. If freetraders call that one of their figures, protectionists need not object. Less than ten years ago, before steel rails were made in the States to any extent sufficient to affect the market, the English price was over $100 per ton, on which value the duty of $28 was only from 25 to 30 per cent. The capacity of American steel rail mills now aggregates two million tons per annum, which is more than seven-eighths of the capacity of all the rest of the world, England of course included. And it is this vast American production mainly which has in nine years reduced the price of steel steels from $100 per ton to $42, at which latter figure they can now be obtained at American mills. The duty of $28 looks big, but see what it has done; it has doubled the world's production of steel rails, and has reduced the price by more than one half. Suppose the duty wholly abolished and the American mills closed, the English price would in a few weeks rise to $50 per ton or more, owing to a new American demand of from one million to two million tons per annum coming upon the English market. The effect of home protection in making articles cheap by keeping foreign prices down is a point in favor of protection which has never yet received the attention which its importance demands.

To put the matter briefly—the country having the highest protection in the world now proposes to make certain reductions, which will, after all, leave it the highest still. Certain unsound timbers, particularly exposed to attack, are to be replaced by stronger ones, leaving the whole structure stronger than before. Already American freetraders have got over their first spasm of triumph over a supposed victory for their cause, and are beginning on sober second thought to denounce the proposed new tariff as a protectionist fraud. That ought to show Canadians how the land really lies.

The board of trade of St. John, N. B., still urges the claims of that city for becoming the winter port of the dominion. By the completion of the Megantic line to Montreal, and of the Canada Pacific westward, St. John claims that it will then have the shortest through line from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

In 1882, the quantity of Indian wheat sent to England was more than three times that from Canada or Australia. Good authorities say that with increased railway facilities there is no limit to the quantity of wheat Northwestern India can send out. The natives prefer rice, which can easily be supplied from Southern India and China at so cheap a rate as to enable nearly all the wheat grown to be exported. Of course, as a great quantity of British goods are going to India, the freight rates on the wheat are low.

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